

## Dockery Farms, Birthplace of the Blues and Historic Cotton Farm, To Receive Mississippi Heritage Designation by Governor Haley Barbour

Dockery, Mississippi —Will Porteous, chairman of the board of Dockery Farms Foundation and the great grandson of Will Dockery, who founded of Dockery Farms in 1895, announced that Dockery Farms will receive designation as one of Mississippi's important heritage sites in a special ceremony with Governor Haley Barbour on Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

Mr. Porteous remarked, "On behalf of Dockery Farms, my late grandmother Keith Dockery Mclean, and our whole family, we are deeply honored and proud to receive this heritage designation which will ensure that a leading chapter in Mississippi's history and America's will be preserved for the enjoyment and education of people around the world."

The ceremony, to be held at Dockery Farms from 6:00-8:00PM on Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, is being presented by the Mississippi Heritage Trust Association, whose goal is the preservation of the state's treasured sites of historic significance such as Dockery Farms. The ceremony will feature Governor Barbour's presentation of the certificate of heritage designation on the National Register of Historic Places to two of Will Dockery's granddaughters, Keith Derbes and Kay Clark, and Bill Lester, Executive Director of Dockery Farms Foundation.

According to Governor Barbour, "I could not be more delighted to confer heritage status to one of our state's historic crown jewels with this well deserved and important recognition. Dockery Farms encapsulates the unique culture of Mississippi in one place: the blues and cotton -- a part of our history that must be preserved for future generations."

The event will also feature introductory remarks by Dockery Farms Foundation Executive Director Bill Lester; economic historian, author and Dockery Farms Foundation board member Gene Dattel, a native of the Delta; and Richard Presiosi, Executive Director of the Mississippi Heritage Trust Association.

Dattel, a noted expert on cotton and race, will speak about the global impact of Delta cotton farming enterprises such as Dockery Farms as well as its significance as the birthplace of the blues.

Dattel will also preview a brief audio documentary: Dockery Farms Heritage©, narrated by Academy Award winning actor Morgan Freeman, which tells the story of Dockery Farms.

Dockery Farms is a site of exceptional national and world significance in the area of music and is one of the few existing examples of American agricultural, economic, racial and social heritage in the Delta.

Dockery Farms and the Delta were established to produce cotton, America's most important export of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The migration of whites and blacks to the Delta to cultivate cotton created a culture which in turn gave birth to the blues.

As is well documented, Dockery Farms was home to blues legend and father of the blues Charlie Patton. Patton came to Dockery with his family as a seven year old boy and lived, worked and learned to play guitar from musical mentor and fellow farmhand Henry Sloan.

Patton was discovered by talent scout W.R. Calaway and recorded 29 songs for the American Record Company in 1934, among them "High Sheriff Blues" and "Pea Vine Blues."

Many other blues singers were taught or influenced by Charlie Patton, including Son House, Robert Johnson, Roebuck "Pops" Staples and Howlin' Wolf.

Invitations and further information about the ceremony can be obtained by calling Bill Lester, Executive Director of Dockery Farms, at 662-846-4720.